

grants to combat violence against women, a National Domestic Violence Hotline, and battered women's shelters and services, VAWA created both civil and criminal causes of action to target domestic violence and sexual assault.

A few months ago, the Supreme Court struck down a provision of VAWA, which allowed victims of gender-motivated violence to sue their attackers in federal court. Importantly, that case, *United States v. Morrison*, did not affect the validity of the rest of VAWA, which is clearly constitutional.

But, *Morrison* is just the latest in a series of cases in which the Supreme Court has, in my view, improperly narrowed Congress' authority to legislate under the Commerce Clause.

The Court's 5-4 majority disregarded the mountain of evidence that Congress had amassed through four years of hearings, documenting the effects of violence against women on interstate commerce. The Court's majority substituted its own judgment for that of Congress—and this from supposedly "conservative" Justices who purport to defer to Congressional findings.

The *Morrison* decision vividly demonstrates the important role the next President will have in shaping the composition of the Supreme Court, and ensuring that the Court respect Congress' authority to protect the civil rights of our citizens.

In response to the *Morrison* decision, I am introducing the "Violence Against Women Civil Rights Restoration Act of 2000." This legislation will restore the ability of victims of gender-motivated violence to seek justice in federal court, where there is a connection to interstate commerce.

For example, a rape victim could bring a civil suit against her attacker in federal court where the attacker crosses a state line; if he uses a facility or instrumentality of interstate commerce—such as the roads, the telephone, or the Internet; or if he uses a gun, weapon, or drug that has traveled in interstate commerce. In addition, she could bring a case where the intent of the offense is to interfere with her participation in commercial or economic activity.

The bill also authorizes the Attorney General to prevent discrimination in the investigation and prosecution of gender-based crimes. This bill will ensure that all victims have fair and equal access to the courts.

I want to thank the domestic violence and sexual assault communities for their support of this legislation, especially NOW Legal Defense and Education fund, who defended Christy Brzonkala before the Supreme Court, and who has been instrumental in drafting this bill.

I look forward to working with the Majority, the Senate, and the White House to help pass this bill into law and restore the civil remedy for victims of gender-based violence.

TRIBUTE TO LT. COL. RICHARD F. BLANSETT, 174TH FIGHTER WING

HON. JAMES T. WALSH

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 27, 2000

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, on October 1, 2000 Lt. Col. Richard F. Blansett is retiring as

the comptroller for the 174th Fighter Wing of the New York Air National Guard located at Hancock Field in Syracuse, NY. He assumed the position of comptroller on October 1, 1989. In this capacity, he is responsible for the development and administration of the Wing's \$29 million annual budget as well as a variety of military personnel resources.

Lieutenant Colonel Blansett was born on December 25, 1944 in Watertown, NY and graduated from Watertown High School in June of 1962. He holds a bachelor of arts degree from Union College and a master of science degree in Human Resource Management from Chapman University.

Lieutenant Colonel Blansett began his military career as a traditional guardsman with the 174th Fighter Wing, enlisting as an administrative clerk assigned to the Fuels Branch in 1967. Since then, he has served the Wing in its Support Group Orderly Room, Supply Squadron Executive Support Office and Combat Support Squadron. He has served as Squadron Executive Support Officer, Squadron On-the-Job Administrator, Base Chief Career Counselor and Base Utilization Officer, rising in rank to staff sergeant, to second lieutenant and to captain.

In 1981, then Captain Blansett became a full-time member of the Guard as the Wing Logistics Plans Officer. In 1985, he was transferred to the Resources Squadron to serve as budget officer and cost analysis officer. He continued to be a leader in logistical deployments as the air cargo officer—a heavy additional duty that he maintains to date.

In 1989, then Major Blansett was assigned to his current position as comptroller. During Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm in 1990-91, when the 174th Fighter Wing was deployed to the Persian Gulf, Major Blansett served as the acting Deputy Commander for Resources.

On September 19, 1993 Major Blansett was promoted to lieutenant colonel. Throughout his tenure in this position, Lieutenant Colonel Blansett implemented and managed a variety of programs at base level and has been instrumental in managing the evolution of financial management processes from paper to electronic systems. In his 11 years in this position, Lieutenant Colonel Blansett has maximized unit resources and played a crucial role in the improvement of Hancock Field's infrastructure.

He has served as chairman of the Comptroller Advisory Board for the entire Air National Guard and, most recently, has advised and assisted the 174th in its Aerospace Expeditionary Force Deployment Operation. He also has played a key role in shaping the first home-station Operational Readiness Inspection conducted by Air Combat Command.

During his time in service Lieutenant Colonel Blansett has received numerous medals and commendations. More importantly, he has earned the respect and admiration of the men and women who serve with him.

In addition to his work duties, Lieutenant Colonel Blansett has been actively involved in the Boy Scout organization, serving as both a scoutmaster and Explorer advisor. Lieutenant Colonel Blansett and his wife, Julie, have a son, Christopher, daughter-in-law, Jen, and daughter Kimberly, all of whom reside in the Syracuse area.

I take this opportunity to applaud and commend Lieutenant Colonel Blansett for his 30-plus years of service to the 174th Fighter Wing and wish him well as he conquers new challenges in retirement. We are all better off for his years of dedication and sacrifice.

25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 27, 2000

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, next Tuesday marks the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, which organized what has become known as the Helsinki or OSCE process, a critical venue in which the United States has sought to advance human rights, democracy and the rule of law. With its language on human rights, the Helsinki Final Act granted human rights of a fundamental principle in regulating international relations. The Final Act's emphasis on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is rooted in the recognition that the declaration of such rights affirms the inherent dignity of men and women and are not privileges bestowed at the whim of the state. The commitments are worth reading again. Among the many pages, allow me to quote from several of the documents:

In the Helsinki Final Act, the participating States commit to "respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion."

In the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe, the participating states declared, "Human rights and fundamental freedoms are the birthright of all human beings, are inalienable and are guaranteed by law. Their protection and promotion is the first responsibility of government."

In the 1991 Document of the Moscow Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, the participating States "categorically and irrevocably declare[d] that the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension of the CSCE are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the States concerned."

In the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe, the participating States committed themselves "to build, consolidate and strengthen democracy as the only system of government of our nations."

The 1999 Istanbul Charter for European Security and Istanbul Summit Declaration notes the particular challenges of ending violence against women and children as well as sexual exploitation and all forms of trafficking in human beings, strengthening efforts to combat corruption, eradicating torture, reinforcing efforts to end discrimination against Roma and Sinti, and promoting democracy and respect for human rights in Serbia.

Equally important, the standards of Helsinki, which served as a valuable lever in pressing